



Minuteman UPDATE

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Massachusetts National
Guard monthly
newsletter for members,
families, and friends

Visit the Massachusetts National Guard Website at www.state.ma.us/guard

104th Infantry welcomed home

by Chief Warrant Officer Richard Woodlock, JFHQ-MA PAO

Soldiers from the 104th Infantry Regiment gathered at the Battalion Headquarters in Westfield to celebrate their homecoming from their latest mission supporting Operation Noble Eagle.

Approximately 200 soldiers were on a year-long deployment augmenting DoD Police and providing facility security at Ft. Monmouth, NJ. Many of the soldiers had recently returned from Bosnia's Operation Joint Guard (SFOR 10) and found themselves activated again.

"The mission was a challenge," said Sgt. 1st Class Heriberto Colon, a 27 year member of the National Guard. "Long shifts, snow and being away from family made things tough at times. I am proud to be in the Guard. People now know we're not just weekenders."

With two successful missions in two years, the battalion is looking forward to getting back to some good infantry training and team building.

Guard caravan supplies war wounded

Story and Photo by Sgt. Jordan St. John, JFHQ-MA PAO

"Just one soldier looking out for another soldier," said Sgt. 1st Class Keith Kennedy as he explained how two vans of goods were collected in Western Massachusetts for soldiers recuperating from wounds at an Army hospital in the Nation's capital.

Kennedy, of Westfield, is a member of the Massachusetts Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Command. He and fellow recruiting member Staff Sgt. Francesco G. Falorni, of Methuen, drove two vans filled with everything from suitcases and sweat suits to books and phone cards several hundred miles through driving rain one Friday in early November to the sprawling Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

"Every thing from the books to the phone cards with long distanced calls time totaling some 70 hours came from people who support our soldiers and wanted to help a bit," noted Kennedy.

He explained that after seeing a



Sgt. 1st Class Keith Kennedy passes up a box of supplies for injured soldiers to Staff Sgt. Francesco Falorni at Walter Reed Medical Center.

news report about the items needed by wounded and injured soldiers from Iraq who were being treated at Walter Reed, he stationed himself at a Wal-Mart store in Westfield for a few weekends to collect donations.

Chaplains aid soldiers through deployments

by Spc. Matthew Benedetti, JFHQ-MA PAO

It could be a word of encouragement, a discussion of a family matter or a crisis of faith. Regardless of the circumstance, US Army chaplain Maj. Peter Daratsos of the Natick Soldiers System Center and chaplain's assistant Sgt. John Duffy, a Bronx native, are always accessible to National Guard members. The past few years have been an uncertain time for soldiers and their families. Many have been turning to clergy for spiritual guidance and support. Daratsos and Duffy travel to every major military installation in the Commonwealth, and have become a very popular team with the Massachusetts National Guard members.

"Constant change, overseas duty and adapting to a new environment are scary things," Daratsos said. "You grow up in a hurry. Often the soldiers simply need someone to listen and understand the position they are in. I am an officer and a chaplain, they know that I will be able to empathize with their situation. And they don't have to worry about our conversation going anywhere."

"We try to be a resource for soldiers, many returning from combat situations, who need to talk to someone," said Daratsos. "Often times we just listen. Wearing the same uniform makes it easier to establish communication and reach a comfort level with one another."

DEAR LEADERS, AIRMEN, SOLDIERS,
CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES AND FAMILY MEMBERS
OF THE MASSACHUSETTS NATIONAL GUARD

HAPPY HOLIDAYS 2003


The holidays are a time to be thankful, and I am thankful to have had the opportunity to serve as your Adjutant General. As we approach the New Year, I look back upon the past few years with pride in what this organization has accomplished. The dedication of our airmen, soldiers and civilian employees, and the selfless sacrifices made by their families is simply awe-inspiring. Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom – we supported these and other missions with the highest level of professionalism and esprit de corps, mobilizing more soldiers and airmen since September 11, 2001 than we have for any conflict in over half a century.

The holidays are also a time to spend with loved ones. This holiday season will find many of our soldiers and airmen serving overseas, unable to be with their families. Our thoughts are with these brave service members, and with the husbands, wives, parents and children who miss them. Our hearts go out to the Massachusetts National Guard members who were injured while serving their country, their families, and particularly to the family and friends of Sgt. 1st Class Robert Rooney, who we lost in a tragic accident in Kuwait.

Finally, the holidays are time to look forward. As I look to the years ahead, I like what I see. The next generation of leaders is gaining invaluable experience serving on active duty at home and abroad. Successful homeland defense missions have proven that our Guard members can still be ready on a moment's notice to protect our citizens at home, as we have been for the past 300 years and will be for the next 300.

Jointness is the key to our future success, and we are ahead of the game. Over the past few years I have seen closer co-operation between the Massachusetts Air and Army National Guard than at any other time in my career. The results speak for themselves. After years of hard work we were able to extend the Army and Air Force leases for the Massachusetts Military Reservation, which will provide us with quality joint training facilities for the next half century. A new lease is being negotiated for Barnes Air National Guard Base in Westfield, which will help improve our readiness in both Air Force and Army aviation.

Everything I have mentioned is due to your efforts. Thank you all for your dedication and personal sacrifice. I wish you all a healthy, happy and safe holiday season.



GEORGE W. KEEFE
Major General, MAANG
The Adjutant General

MOAA offers grants to Guard dependants



The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) is offering \$50,000 of scholarship

money to Guard dependants for the 2004-2005 school year.

The "Base/Post Scholarship" is a MOAA program to help 50 college-bound or current undergraduate students with individual \$1,000 grants through a random drawing. MOAA membership is not required and there are no need-base criteria, no GPA minimum, no essay and no fees. Students need only to complete the online application located on their website: www.MOAA.org. Applications must be received by noon, EST, March 1, 2004. To be eligible, a student must be under 24 and working on a first undergraduate degree.

Last year, MOAA awarded 32 grants to children of the National Guard and Reserve and assisted over 1,300 dependants through zero-interest loans.

Shopping for Guard and Reserve soldiers has no limits

The Department of Defense announced that members of the Ready Reserve (which includes members of the Selected Reserve, Individual Ready Reserve and Inactive National Guard) and members of the Retired Reserve who possess a Uniformed Services Identification Card, have been allowed unlimited access to commissary stores.

Also included are former members eligible for retired pay at age 60 but who have not yet attained the age of 60 and who possess a Department of Defense Civilian Identification Card and dependents of the members described above who have a Uniformed Services Identification Card or who have a distinct identification card used as an authorization card for benefits and privileges administered by the Uniformed Services.

"Instructions have gone out to all continental U.S. stores informing them that reservists now have unlimited shopping and telling store managers how to welcome members of the

National Guard and Reserve to the full use of the commissary benefit," said Patrick Nixon, deputy director of the Defense Commissary Agency.

Guard and Reserve members were authorized only 24 commissary shopping days per calendar year until today when the president signed the National Defense Authorization Act, which contained provisions eliminating the restrictions. Commissaries have immediately adopted the new provisions, which means Guard and Reserve members will no longer have to present a Commissary Privilege Card when they shop.

"I want to thank Congress and the Department of Defense for their efforts in bringing the commissary shopping privilege to the total force," said Patrick Nixon, deputy director of the Defense Commissary Agency.

For more information about the Defense Commissary Agency, see their website at www.commissaries.com.